



Ada County Medical Society's

PHYSICIAN CAREER STAGES

2017 Series

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“Doctors without Borders”

Thoughts on Professional Boundaries

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OVERVIEW

- Introductions
- Overview of “Boundaries”
- Approaches to Boundary Management
 - Contextual Awareness
 - Specific Strategies
- Dinner Table Discussions
- Large Group Debrief



“...whether and how we say No determines the very quality of our lives”

-William Ury



The short answer is...

...it depends.

“...we’ve learned that practices are complex adaptive systems that evolve over time and respond to a host of internal and external factors that influence their outcomes.”

-Tallia et al. (2006); “7 Characteristics of Successful Work Relationships”

Causes of boundary problems

- Culture of medicine
- Culture of “always on” (text, email, social media)
- Current sociological shifts (peer marriages, etc.)



Symptoms of poor boundaries

- Cluttered life
- Stretched too thin
- Busy but not productive
- Stressed
- Distracted
- Depressed

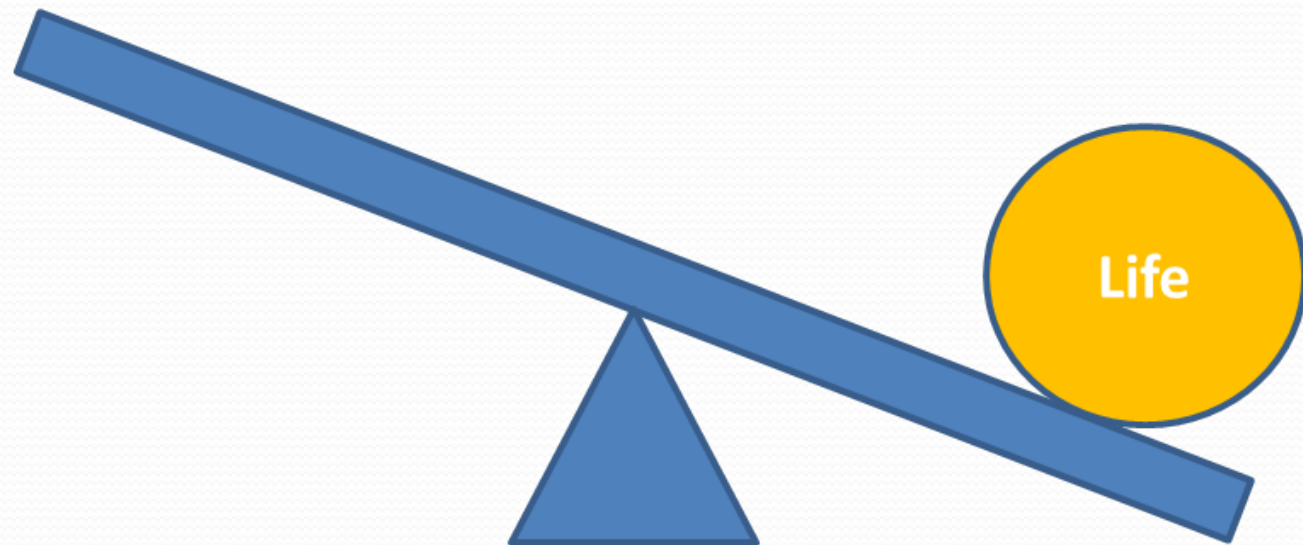



Work & Life?

- Balance
- Integration

-AND/OR-

- Passion
- Values
- Fulfillment





“The difference between successful people and very successful people is that very successful people say no to almost everything [...so they are free to say yes when it matters most].”

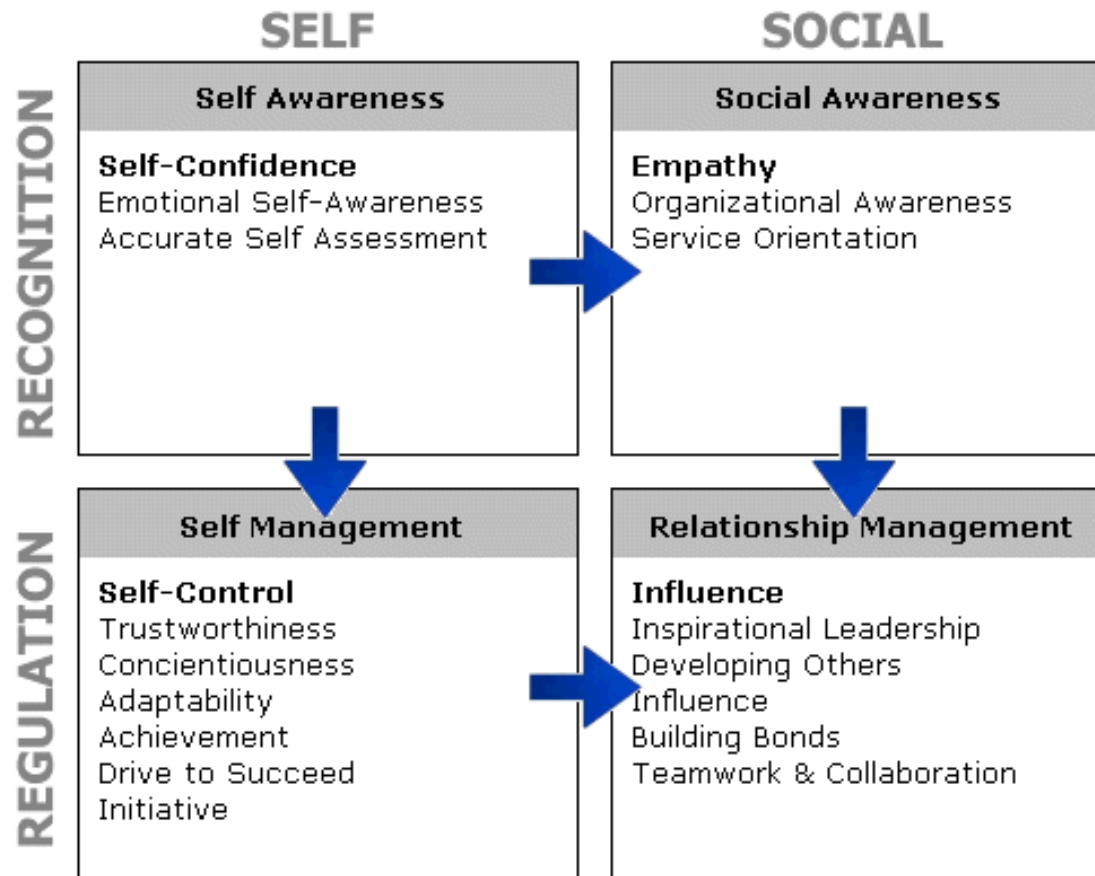
-Warren Buffet



Preview

1. Know thyself (values, emotions, motivations)
2. Know your context
3. Understand your role and the overall relationship
4. Say it directly
5. Be assertive and courteous (not passive; not aggressive)
6. Be firm
7. Be “selfish” strategically

Know Thyself



Emotional Intelligence

	Self	Other
Awareness	<p>Self-awareness</p> <p>What are you feeling?</p> <p>How did these feelings arise?</p> <p>What information do they carry?</p>	<p>Social-awareness</p> <p>What are they feeling?</p> <p>How did those feelings arise?</p>
Actions	<p>Self-management</p> <p>How do you want to feel?</p> <p>What do you need to do in order to feel that way?</p>	<p>Relationship management</p> <p>How do you want them to feel?</p> <p>What do you need to do in order for them to feel that way?</p>

Contextual Influences

- External
 - Power differentials in your work setting
 - manage up & manage down
 - Hidden assumptions
 - cultural rules & routines at work
 - Dual relationships with coworkers and colleagues
- Internal
 - Values
 - Emotions
 - Biases

Contextual Influences

- External
 - Power differentials in your work setting
 - manage up & manage down
 - probably easier to say no to a subordinate than a superior
 - differences in rank can define boundaries

A Word on Rank



Rankism = abusive, discriminatory or exploitive behavior towards people because of their rank in a hierarchy



Robert Fuller, PhD

Contextual Influences

- External
 - Hidden assumptions
 - cultural rules & routines at work

Contextual Influences

- External
 - Dual relationships with coworkers and colleagues
 - Little explored and sometimes conflicting messages on this topic. Some data supports practice of “varied interactions.”

Contextual Influences

- Internal
 - Values-Do no harm, autonomy, justice, beneficence
 - Emotions-anxiety, fear, anger, joy
 - Biases-a multitude, we must acknowledge they exist

Practice Characteristics

- Trust
- Respect
- Diversity
- Mindfulness
- Interrelatedness
- Varied Interactions
- Effective Communication Framework

Strategies for Saying “No”

1. Say it directly
2. Be assertive and courteous (not passive, not aggressive)
3. Be firm


Assertiveness Is Simple but Hard					
	NonAssertive (Passive)		Assertive (Tactful)		Aggressive (Rude)
☹	Honest	✓	Honest	✓	Honest
✓	Appropriate	✓	Appropriate	☹	Appropriate
✓	Respectful	✓	Respectful	☹	Respectful
☹	Direct	✓	Direct	✓	Direct

The Power of a Positive “No”

- “No, thank you.”
- “I have a policy...”
- “No, not now...” /or/ “No, not this time...”
- “I have to decline rather than do a poor job.”
- “Unfortunately, no. If I help you right now, I will be letting others down.”

Common Mistakes

- “I’m too stressed out.”
- “I’m too busy.”
- “I am already overcommitted.”
- Insincerity, lying, or trying to “save” the relationship



“...no woman over the age of 40 should ever help anyone move, ever again, under any circumstances. You have helped enough. You can say no. **No is a complete sentence.**”

-Anne Lamott



Summary Tips

1. Know thyself (values, emotions, motivations)
2. Be aware of context
3. Understand your role and the overall relationship
4. Say it directly
5. Be assertive and courteous (not passive; not aggressive)
6. Be firm
7. Be “selfish” strategically

Table Discussion Questions

1. What dual relationships do you face at work? With colleagues and subordinates? Benefits and risks? Impact on saying “no” or setting boundaries when necessary?
2. What past mistakes in boundary setting inform how you currently manage work-life integration?
3. What is the difference between being genuine with a coworker vs. self-disclosure (what is the difference between emotion regulation and "stuffing" true feelings?)
4. How does culture impact boundaries and self-disclosure in your work experiences?

Resources

- William Ury. The Power of a Positive No: Save the deal, save the relationship, and still say no
- Greg McKeown. Essentialism
- Robert Cialdini. Influence and Pre-Suasion
- Robert Fuller. Somebodies and Nobodies